

250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200 801.538.7500

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Contact: Sydnee Dickson, Teaching and Learning director

801-538-7739 · sydnee.dickson@schools.utah.gov

Utah State Office of Education to Create Open Textbooks

SALT LAKE CITY -- The Utah State of Office of Education (USOE) today announced it will develop and support open textbooks in the key curriculum areas of secondary language arts, science, and mathematics. USOE will encourage districts and schools throughout the state to consider adopting these textbooks for use beginning this fall.

Open textbooks are textbooks written and synthesized by experts, vetted by peers, and made available online for free access, downloading, and use by anyone. Open textbooks can also be printed through print-on-demand or other printing services for settings in which online use is impossible or impractical. In earlier pilot programs, open textbooks have been printed and provided to more than 3,800 Utah high school science students at a cost of about \$5 per book, compared to an average cost of about \$80 for a typical high school science textbook.

"Utah's open textbooks are a great use of technology," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Larry K. Shumway. "Texts get into classrooms quickly and can be updated as needed rather than on a publishing schedule – something that's particularly important in science. The open textbook also adds to Utah's reputation as the most cost-

efficient school system in the country. This is a fantastic way to get the latest textbooks into the hands of Utah's nearly 600,000 public school students."

"We're thrilled that the State of Utah is encouraging school districts to consider adopting open textbooks," said Barbara Chow, Education Programs director at The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which helped fund the project. "At a time when education budgets are under increasing stress, digital technology in the form of open textbooks now offers the potential to save school systems millions of dollars."

Later this spring the Utah State Office of Education will invite all districts and charter schools across the state to attend informational meetings and professional development designed to help open textbook adoptions succeed.

The decision to pursue open textbooks at scale comes after two years of successful open textbook pilots led by David Wiley of Brigham Young University's David O. McKay School of Education. Each pilot was conducted by the BYU-Public School Partnership in partnership with the Utah State Office of Education. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation provided funding. Mathematics and science textbooks will be based on books originally published by the CK12 Foundation, a not-for-profit organization based in California founded with the mission to produce free and open source K-12 materials aligned to state curriculum.

In new research soon to be published in the *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, Wiley and his colleagues found that Utah high school students learn the same amount of science in classes using the \$5 open textbooks as they do in classes using the \$80 traditional textbooks.